

# Daniel K. Inouye

## 1924–2012

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE 1959–1963

UNITED STATES SENATOR 1963–2012

DEMOCRAT FROM HAWAII

When Daniel K. Inouye first took his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1959, Speaker Sam Rayburn of Texas took quick stock of the young legislator. “You’ll soon be the second most widely recognized member in the Congress,” mused the Speaker, who embodied the institution for so many Americans. “We don’t have too many one-armed, Japanese Congressmen here.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Inouye left an indelible mark on Hawaiian politics and on the U.S. Congress, where he served for a combined 53 years in the House and Senate, serving with 412 Senators during his long tenure in that chamber. A proud war veteran and energetic legislator, Inouye battled for party leadership and embraced Members of Congress from across the aisle. On November 20, 2013, President Barack Obama posthumously awarded Inouye the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Senator Inouye “taught all of us that no matter what you look like or where you come from,” Obama observed, “this country has a place for everybody who’s willing to serve and work hard.”<sup>2</sup>

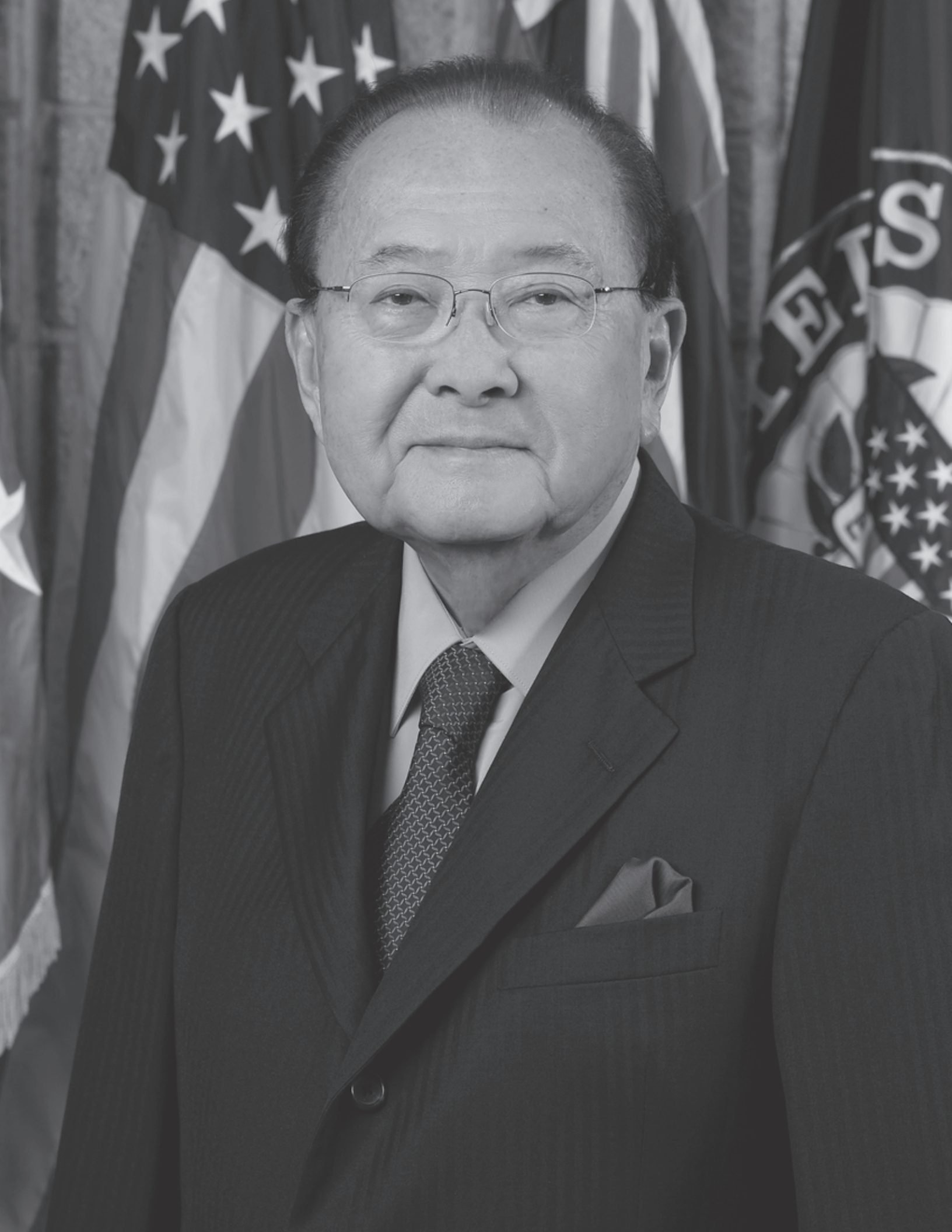
Daniel Ken Inouye was born on September 7, 1924, in Honolulu, Hawaii, to Hyotaro Inouye, a file clerk, and Kame Imanaga, who, as a young orphan, had been taken in by Native Hawaiians.<sup>3</sup> A Methodist minister and his family adopted Inouye’s mother, who was homeless. She named Inouye after her adoptive father. “She made it very clear to me from the time I was very young, ‘I owe a lot to the Hawaiian [people], and I expect you to repay that debt,’” Inouye said.<sup>4</sup> Inouye graduated from McKinley High School in Honolulu, then known as “Tokyo High” because the city’s segregation policies concentrated a high number of ethnic Japanese students at McKinley.<sup>5</sup>

At age 17, Inouye worked for the Red Cross with every intention of becoming a surgeon. “When the war broke out I was a high school senior and preparing myself to go to college and become a doctor,” Inouye said. “I had no

interest in politics.” He rushed to aid the wounded during the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor. Upon turning 18, Inouye applied to enlist in the military but was denied entry because of his race. The U.S. government classified *nisei* (American-born children of Japanese immigrants) unfit for service. “Here I was, though I was a citizen of the United States, I was declared to be an enemy alien and as a result not fit to put on the uniform of the United States,” Inouye recalled.<sup>6</sup>

After petitioning the government to reverse its decision, Inouye volunteered again in 1943 and joined the Army as a private, entering the fabled 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Composed primarily of Japanese-American soldiers, the 442nd served with distinction in the French and Italian campaigns during World War II, and the unit famously rescued the “Lost Battalion” of Texans behind enemy lines in France. Inouye later lost his right arm in a return sweep through Italy, crushing his dream of becoming a surgeon.<sup>7</sup> After his injury, Inouye recovered at Percy Jones Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan, where he met future Senate colleagues Philip Hart of Michigan and Robert Dole of Kansas, with whom he discussed becoming a lawyer and entering national politics.<sup>8</sup>

Inouye spent 20 months in U.S. Army hospitals before being honorably discharged and retiring as a captain on May 27, 1947. He earned a Distinguished Silver Cross, Bronze Star, and a Purple Heart, as well as 12 other medals and citations, for his military service. Though Inouye and the other members of the “Go For Broke” regiment were eventually acknowledged as heroes for their efforts on the Italian front, most received little formal recognition at the time. Only when Hawaiian Senator Daniel Akaka insisted on an Army review of war records nearly a half a century later did their heroism come into focus. Inouye received the Medal of Honor with 21 other Japanese Americans on





June 21, 2000, for his service in World War II. “I take this as the greatest compliment I’ve ever had,” Inouye noted. “I will wear it proudly. And I will not tarnish it.”<sup>9</sup>

After the war, with the assistance of the GI Bill, Inouye graduated from the University of Hawaii in 1950. He then pursued a law degree from George Washington University Law School, where he graduated in 1952 before returning to Hawaii. He was admitted to the bar in 1953 and then served as an assistant public prosecutor for Honolulu during 1953 and 1954. Inouye married Margaret Shinobu Awamura, an instructor at the University of Hawaii, on June 12, 1949, and they had one son, Ken, in 1964.<sup>10</sup> Margaret died in 2006, and on May 24, 2008, Inouye married Irene Hirano, president of the U.S.–Japan Council.<sup>11</sup>

Inouye joined a wave of young Japanese-American World War II veterans graduating from college and returning to Hawaii in the early 1950s. This group, respected for their contributions to the war effort and freshly educated, made an immediate impact on Hawaii’s political system. “The time had come for us to step forward,” Inouye said of this generational shift. “We had fought for that right with all the furious patriotism in our bodies and now we didn’t want to go back to the plantation.... We wanted to take our full place in society.”<sup>12</sup>

Many of the former members of the 442nd became attached to prominent Democrat John Burns. Burns was the final Hawaiian Delegate to Congress and helped secure statehood for the islands before serving three terms as governor from 1963 to 1974. For much of Inouye’s early political career, Burns headed the Hawaiian Democratic Party in spirit, if not always in name.<sup>13</sup> Inouye stood out from this group of Burns protégés and merited special attention from the party. He was elected to the territorial house during the Democratic revolution of 1954, when Democrats swept statewide positions and took control of the legislature long held by Republicans. Inouye served as majority leader in the territorial house until 1958, when he was elected to the territorial senate.

When Hawaii achieved statehood in 1959, Inouye declared his intention to seek a seat in the U.S. Congress. He first planned to run for the Senate, leaving the House

seat open for his territorial senate colleague Patsy Takemoto Mink. But he withdrew from the race and ran for the lone U.S. House seat instead when party stalwarts Oren Long and William Heen ran for the Senate.<sup>14</sup> Long noted this deference and pledged to retire after his first term ended, clearing the way for Inouye to run for the vacant Senate seat in 1962.<sup>15</sup> In 1959 this decision put him in direct conflict with Mink for the Democratic nomination to the U.S. House, and he narrowly defeated her in the primary. He faced Dr. Charles H. Silva, director of the territorial department of institutions, in the general election. While his campaign style was described as “sunny” and “outgoing,” much of his overwhelming appeal came from his status as a war hero. Inouye won in a landslide, garnering 69 percent of the vote.<sup>16</sup>

His election made him the first Japanese-American Member of Congress, but it was his war injuries that initially made him an object of considerable interest in Washington. When Inouye was sworn in on August 24, 1959, he was asked to raise his right hand for the oath. Upon lifting his left hand, “There was a gasp,” Inouye said, noting that many Members did not know he had lost his right arm.<sup>17</sup>

Upon arriving in DC, outgoing Delegate Burns directed Inouye straight to the Texas delegation, with whom Hawaiians had developed a working relationship. Inouye became close with Speaker Rayburn, who steered him to the Agriculture Committee, an influential and helpful assignment for the Hawaiian Islands, notable for their sugar production. In turn, Inouye maintained the friendship between Hawaii and Texas. In 1960 Inouye was an early supporter of Texas Senator Lyndon B. Johnson’s presidential campaign before Johnson eventually accepted John F. Kennedy’s offer to be the vice presidential nominee.

Inouye toiled quietly for his two terms in the House, trying to foster a larger network of support for future campaigns and to protect the sugar industry in Hawaii. His only substantial piece of legislation passed late in his first term, extending several key provisions to recognize Hawaiian statehood in the Hawaii Omnibus Act (H.R. 11602). The act amended a bevy of existing laws to ensure the new state





received the full benefits accorded to the other 49 states.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, Inouye's popularity in the islands helped him soar to re-election in 1960; he took 74 percent of the vote against his Republican opponent, Frederick Titcomb.

Senator Oren Long retired, as promised, in 1962 and backed Inouye's candidacy for the open seat. In the general election Inouye faced Ben F. Dillingham, a scion of one of Hawaii's wealthiest families. The *Honolulu Star-Advertiser* embarrassed Dillingham by endorsing Inouye even though Dillingham's father served as the newspaper's vice president. Dillingham also had opposed statehood, which cost him voter support as well.<sup>19</sup> Despite Inouye's early fears about Dillingham's influence, he received more than twice the number of votes, winning 70 percent of the total. His victory made him the first Japanese-American Senator.<sup>20</sup>

Inouye gained a reputation as a prolific legislator, submitting a flurry of bills, resolutions, and amendments. Most of his early legislation tied the Hawaiian economy tighter to federal spending and the federal bureaucracy. He chose his words carefully and rarely made floor speeches in his early terms. He made an early commitment to Senate traditions that held throughout his tenure when his maiden speech in the Senate supported the filibuster because "Hawaii, being a small state, may have to [resort] to the filibuster to get the nation's attention."<sup>21</sup> Much of his influence derived from that respect for the Senate processes, beginning with the role of the committees.

In the 88th Congress (1963–1965), Inouye was initially appointed to two committees, Armed Services and Public Works. He did not remain on either committee long, moving to the Commerce Committee (later named Commerce, Science, and Transportation) in the 91st Congress (1969–1971) and the Appropriations Committee in the 92nd Congress (1971–1973). He remained on both of these committees through the rest of his Senate career, eventually chairing the Commerce Committee in the 110th Congress (2007–2009) and the Appropriations Committee from 2009 until his death. He also served on the Committee on the District of Columbia in the 1970s and joined the Rules and Administration Committee in 1981, in addition to a number of select and joint committees.<sup>22</sup>

Between his workmanlike approach to legislating and his tight ties with the powerful Texas delegation, Inouye's star rose quickly in the national Democratic Party. He published a book, *Journey to Washington*, with author Lawrence Elliott in 1967 detailing his rise to the Senate. In 1968 Inouye served as the keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which was rocked by anti-war protests. He spoke passionately about the march of progress and the anger of the country's youth, acknowledging their ideals while questioning their confrontational tactics. He called upon the American people to follow their better instincts. "Fellow Americans, this is our country," Inouye said. "Its future is what we, its citizens, will make it. And as we all know, we have much to do. Putting aside hatred on the one hand and timidity on the other, let us grow fresh faith in our purpose and new vigor in citizenship."<sup>23</sup>

Afterward, President Lyndon Johnson tried to convince Hubert Humphrey to select the Hawaiian as his running mate: "I've never known him to make a mistake. He's got cold, clear courage.... It would be fresh and different. He's young and new. And I think your secretary could call him and say, 'Would you please go to Utah, South Carolina, San Francisco?' And I believe he could go to all of them and never lay an egg." Humphrey declined to nominate Inouye, believing that such a move "just takes it a little too far, too fast."<sup>24</sup> For his part, Inouye claimed he had no interest in the position and was content to remain a Senator.<sup>25</sup>

Inouye gradually shifted his stance on the Vietnam War after Nixon's inauguration. He had steadfastly backed the war during the 1960s, but as opposition built, he stated that he regretted his support and attributed it to his close bond with President Johnson and the Texas delegation.<sup>26</sup> As the war dragged on into Nixon's presidency, Inouye cosponsored the War Powers Act of 1973, which limited the President's ability to engage in conflict overseas by asserting congressional power to place time limits on troop deployments.<sup>27</sup>

Inouye was drawn into direct conflict with the administration in February 1973, when the Senate voted



77 to 0 to launch the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities (known as the Ervin Committee for its chairman, North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin). The Ervin Committee investigated the events surrounding the break-in at the Democratic National Committee's Watergate offices in 1972 and the ensuing cover-up. Inouye was selected to serve, but, wanting to keep his head down, refused the appointment four times. Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana told him that, after eliminating chairmen, party leaders, nonlawyers, and presidential hopefuls, only a select few potential candidates remained. Furthermore, congressional Democrats insisted on his participation due to what was seen as his "Mr. Clean image." With that Inouye agreed to serve.<sup>28</sup>

Within months of joining the investigation, Inouye's name appeared in headlines across the country when John J. Wilson, the attorney representing former Nixon chief of staff, H. R. Haldeman, used a racial slur to describe the Senator from Hawaii. When asked by a United Press International reporter about a line of questioning from Senator Lowell Weicker of Connecticut, Wilson responded, "Oh, I don't mind Senator Weicker. . . . What I mind is that little Jap," and gestured toward Inouye. Earlier in the investigation, a hot mic had picked up Inouye describing another of Wilson's clients as "a liar." Wilson initially denied having made the comment about Inouye, but later admitted to it. Later, when asked for a response, Inouye simply said, "I think his statement speaks for itself."<sup>29</sup>

In September 1973, Inouye declared the infamous White House recordings featuring President Nixon uttering scandalous expletives and implicating himself in the cover-up "not essential" to the investigation, stating the committee had enough to go on without them.<sup>30</sup> He was lauded in the press for his focus on campaign finance reform and fair, but firm, treatment of witnesses on the committee. Following the committee's revelations and the press they stirred, Inouye called for a constitutional convention to limit the power of the presidency, bringing attention to abuses of power by Republicans and Democrats alike.<sup>31</sup> Now highly visible, thanks to the televised committee proceedings, Inouye's fame expanded nationally.

Given his success on the Ervin Committee, Inouye was appointed to chair the new Select Committee on Intelligence in 1976, established to provide oversight of U.S. intelligence agencies. Persuaded by Mansfield to accept the post after the furor of the Watergate investigation, Inouye struck a careful balance, pledging not to compromise security while ensuring no intelligence agency would "violate the civil rights of any Americans" under his watch.<sup>32</sup> Inouye voiced concerns as early as December 1976 about the stresses and strains that the job had placed on him, and he sought to establish a precedent of brief chairmanships, believing that such turnover was the best means of ensuring that the committee was not unduly influenced by the intelligence organizations reporting to it. "I'm afraid if you stay on too long in this job, you either go a little off," he said, "or you become a part of the institutions. . . . Either way is wrong."<sup>33</sup> Though he remained on the Intelligence Committee through the 98th Congress (1983–1985), he stepped down as chair after 1977.

Inouye also flexed his muscles on foreign policy from his post as chair of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee, where he frequently cosponsored foreign aid and investment bills and defended them on the floor. "This country has given much, and, in doing so, we have given truth to the ideals we, as a nation, live by," he said. "We must continue to uphold this humanitarian tradition."<sup>34</sup>

Most of his voluminous floor speeches during the post-Watergate Era centered on aid and investment bills and encouraged a more interconnected planet. Consistent with these beliefs, he also supported opening trade with communist China. In 1984 Inouye developed his foreign policy expertise further, serving as chair of the Senate Democratic Central America Study Group to assess U.S. policy in the region. He also served as senior counselor to the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America, also known as the Kissinger Commission.

In the early 1980s, Senator Inouye again gained national prominence when he spoke out about the Abscam Scandal, an FBI sting operation that targeted Members of Congress.



Inouye criticized the FBI on the Senate Floor in December 1980, sympathizing with observers who worried that the scandal represented a “threat to legislative independence inherent in the Abscam operation.”<sup>35</sup> Harrison Williams Jr. of New Jersey was the sole Senator ensnared in the sting. Though uproar persisted on the Senate Floor, the Senate Select Committee on Ethics waited to take up the issue until after the criminal investigation had ended so as not to influence the case.

Following Williams’s criminal conviction and sentencing in February 1982, the Select Committee reported the resolution to expel Williams from the Senate. Inouye acted as Williams’s advocate on the floor, noting first how extraordinary this resolution was in the history of the Senate. “I believe it is important to note that the Senate of the United States has never expelled a Member except where treason or disloyalty to the Union was involved.” He declared the operation was a “manufactured scandal.”<sup>36</sup> “I do not believe that a senator should be expelled for being a fool or committing foolish acts,” Inouye said.<sup>37</sup> Senators did not agree, and once it became clear that the necessary two-thirds would vote for expulsion, Harrison Williams resigned from the Senate on March 11, 1982.<sup>38</sup> The episode earned Inouye a reputation for loyalty under fire.

Inouye’s seniority and success in prior Senate investigatory roles made him a natural choice to lead a new investigation in the wake of another presidential scandal. In late 1986, news organizations brought to light secret operations conducted by National Security Council staff wherein the United States sold arms to Iran and used the profits to fund Nicaraguan Contras, rebel groups opposed to the official Sandinista Junta of National Reconstruction government. Inouye adopted a nonpartisan approach during the so-called Iran-Contra affair, eager to note that the Ronald Reagan administration cooperated in the panel’s investigation while also standing behind the committee’s conclusion that administration officials subverted the rule of law and misled the American public.<sup>39</sup>

Inouye’s nonconfrontational questioning during the nationally televised hearings contrasted sharply with the testimony of charismatic figures like Lieutenant Colonel

Oliver North, frustrating his more partisan colleagues. Inouye stood by his methods even as he grew frustrated with witnesses’ grandstanding. Inouye stated that the administration’s actions derived from “an elitist vision ... that trusts no one—not the people, not the Congress, and not the Cabinet. It is a vision of a government operated by persons convinced they have a monopoly on truth.”<sup>40</sup> His fairness won plaudits, though his unwillingness to maximize political advantages in the scandal worried some within his party.<sup>41</sup>

Once again thrust into the public eye in a highly publicized investigative panel, Inouye initially thrived under the spotlight, readying his internal campaign to become the next Senate Majority Leader. Inouye had served as secretary of the Democratic Caucus since 1978, placing him in the third-ranking leadership post. Several major newspapers pegged him as the Majority-Leader-in-waiting. In 1986 he reportedly struck a deal with Senator Robert Byrd to help the West Virginian win the post of Senate Majority Leader, with the understanding that Byrd would step aside in 1989 and leave an inside track open for Inouye to run for the post.<sup>42</sup>

However, neither Inouye’s experience nor careful positioning secured him the Majority Leader post that eventually went to George Mitchell of Maine. The press blamed a controversial 1987 appropriation that Inouye sponsored and later rescinded to support the construction of religious schools in France, which the Senator himself described as an “error in judgment.” Some also recalled Inouye’s handling of the Iran-Contra Select Committee that some Democrats described as “lukewarm” for failing to press the case against the Reagan administration. Within the Democratic Caucus, Inouye won the votes of only 14 of the 55 Senators.<sup>43</sup>

When Senator Byrd passed away on June 28, 2010, Inouye became the President pro tempore of the United States Senate, making him the highest-ranking Asian American in the United States and third in the line of presidential succession. While the position did not give him a direct leadership role over policy formation, it nevertheless was valued by Inouye, reflecting his colleagues’



acknowledgment that, as the dean of the Senate, he held special knowledge of the chamber's rules, procedures, and practices.

Inouye became famous for supporting earmarks that steered federal dollars to Hawaii. As chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense and later as the head of the full committee, he was highly successful in securing money for his constituency. In 1997 alone, federal spending in Hawaii grew \$170 million to a total of \$8.16 billion, making it the fifth highest per capita recipient of federal funds.

Though his tactics in funneling federal spending to Hawaii made him the target of pork barrel watchdog groups, Inouye refused to apologize for his support of the Hawaiian economy. Inouye often focused on shipping bills.<sup>44</sup> In 1997 he inserted a provision into an annual appropriations bill that provided what he referred to as a "preference" to American Classic Voyages to run the cruise ship industry out of Hawaii. Senator John McCain of Arizona called the provision a government-sponsored monopoly and encouraged President William J. (Bill) Clinton to use his line-item veto against the bill.<sup>45</sup> The provision survived. "Since we're insular and dependent on merchant marine," Inouye had proclaimed, "we find ourselves deeply involved in activities of the sea."

Inouye's history with earmarks included acquiring support for a Hawaiian bank and arranging a \$50 million gift to his alma mater, George Washington University.<sup>46</sup> When the push for earmark reform heated up in 2006, Inouye joined his friend, Republican Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, in dismissing the idea. "I don't see any monumental changes," he declared. "If something is wrong we should clean house, but if they can explain it and justify it, I will look at it."<sup>47</sup> Inouye continued to use earmarks as he had for decades until their eventual ban in 2011.<sup>48</sup>

Inouye took largely liberal social positions on policies such as abortion rights, gun control, and civil liberties. His policies frequently favored the disenfranchised. He was a strong supporter of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and, as a close friend of Lyndon B. Johnson, stood strongly behind the Great Society programs such as Medicaid, Head Start,

and food stamps. Inouye's stance on civil rights grew out of his own experiences as a Japanese American and living in the patchwork Hawaiian cultural community. During and after the debate over the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Inouye repeatedly evoked Hawaiian values and the wishes of his diverse constituency.

After passage, Inouye shared an advertisement Hawaiians had placed in the *Washington Post* thanking Congress for the bill's passage, "Now we have rules to help us achieve our ideal—an era of universal tolerance, understanding, peace, and aloha."<sup>49</sup> Inouye also supported DC statehood, citing Hawaii's own struggle to join the Union. Inouye served on the Committee on the District of Columbia and was a strong proponent of the Metrorail, specifically the work done to give people living with disabilities access to the system. Inouye cosponsored the District of Columbia Self-Government and Governmental Reorganization Act in 1973 (S. 1435).

This support for the disenfranchised extended to the Asian-American community both inside and outside of Hawaii. Inouye served as a member of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and, in 1997, joined fellow Hawaiian Senator Daniel Akaka to help Philippine veterans of World War II naturalize as U.S. citizens. Inouye kept his promise to his mother to protect Native Hawaiians when he helped to pass the Native Hawaiian Education Act and the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act in 1988, setting up programs to spur Native Hawaiians' incorporation into American society.

Inouye also stood behind fellow Japanese Americans. In 1981 he proposed the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, which led to the 1988 Civil Liberties Act that provided redress to Japanese Americans affected by internment during World War II.<sup>50</sup> Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, Inouye quickly defended American Muslims, comparing the bigotry directed at them to the experience of Japanese Americans following Pearl Harbor.<sup>51</sup>

This interest in preserving the rights of minorities and correcting past wrongs found natural expression through his work on the Select Committee on Indian Affairs.



Inouye wound up on Indian Affairs by chance. As a member of the steering committee, which made committee assignments, he had been directed to fill a vacancy on the select committee. When Inouye could not fill the slot, Senator Byrd suggested Inouye fill the seat himself. Inouye insisted he lacked the expertise, but Byrd responded in jest, “At least you look like one.”<sup>52</sup> Though Inouye had initially preferred not to serve on the committee, his interest grew as he learned the extent to which the American government had “shortchanged” American Indians. “By God, did we do all these things?” he recalled thinking. “We should be embarrassed and ashamed of ourselves.”<sup>53</sup>

In 1993 Inouye fought to defend the Committee on Indian Affairs (he had introduced successful legislation in early 1993 to remove the term “select” from the committee’s name) from the threat of disbandment. Testifying with Senator McCain before the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, Inouye argued that the Constitution vested Congress with power over Indian affairs and, thus, the committee could not be removed except by constitutional amendment. “Even if we were not charged with legal obligations and a trust responsibility, we would still have to recognize the moral imperative that we, as a nation, are charged with when it comes to improving the conditions of life in reservation communities,” he argued.<sup>54</sup> His commitment to the committee was so strong that, when Senator Wendell Ford of Kentucky retired in 1998, Inouye passed on becoming Ranking Member on the Rules and Administration Committee so he could retain his position on Indian Affairs. He claimed in 1999 that he devoted more time and effort to his work on Indian Affairs than any other committee.<sup>55</sup>

Inouye described his approach to working with Senate colleagues as nonpartisan rather than bipartisan and mused, “I think those of us who get older should make an extra effort to demonstrate what non-partisanship can result in.”<sup>56</sup> This independent streak occasionally rankled fellow Democrats. Inouye viewed Senator Stevens as a close friend; the pair often called one another “brother” on the Senate Floor.<sup>57</sup> In 1990 he made a radio ad to

support Republican Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon, his colleague on the Appropriations Committee.

In 2008, as Senator Stevens faced federal charges and a stiff re-election campaign, Inouye flew out to Alaska to campaign for his old friend.<sup>58</sup> Near the end of his career, Inouye backed Hillary Clinton as his party’s nominee for President; Inouye had a long, fruitful relationship with President Bill Clinton’s administration. The endorsement created a rift with the eventual nominee, Barack Obama, who spent much of his early life growing up in Hawaii. Until the Obama administration took office in 2009, Inouye’s influence within the Democratic Party and particularly within Hawaii had few equals.

Inouye routinely received between three to four times the number of votes his opponents received. Through 1986, Inouye never won less than 73 percent of the vote in his Senate campaigns, thriving on his easygoing, charming demeanor. He was the master “of a sunny, outgoing type of campaigning.”<sup>59</sup> His only real electoral challenge came in 1992, facing a broader field of challengers from the Republican, Libertarian, and Green Parties. Republican opponent Richard Reed obtained a secretly recorded tape from Inouye’s longtime hairstylist that purported that the Senator had sexually assaulted her in 1975. Reed used the allegation in campaign ads against Inouye. No inquiry was launched, however, since the hairstylist, Lenore Kwock, declined to press charges. Reed took down the ads when Kwock threatened his campaign with a lawsuit. Inouye, who himself welcomed an investigation but otherwise refused to comment on the allegations, won the election with 57 percent of the vote.<sup>60</sup> He returned to his typical overwhelming margins in the following elections, receiving at least 75 percent of the vote in each succeeding election after 1992.

Late in his long career in the public eye, Inouye had ascended to the pinnacle of politics in the Aloha State and had become a revered figure in the U.S. Senate. His efforts to shape the political makeup of Hawaii extended back to his time as a protégé of Delegate John Burns. Early in his career, Inouye often joined Burns and fellow 442nd veteran and Democratic strategist Dan Aoki for breakfast to pick





delegates to the Democratic National Conventions.<sup>61</sup> Starting in the mid-1960s and persisting for decades, Inouye had a hand in choosing Democrats for open seats across the state.<sup>62</sup>

Some observers criticized that influence, but Inouye was largely unrepentant. “In certain circles, I’m the godfather,” Inouye said. His reach extended deep into state and municipal politics thanks to his broad network of former staffers and assistants. “Like the sun is to our solar system, he is to our state,” Honolulu mayor and former legislative assistant Kirk Caldwell said of Inouye.<sup>63</sup> It was a shock, then, when Senator Akaka announced his impending retirement in 2011 and Inouye announced his intention to stay out of the primary process. “I’m a good Democrat, and I want to see a Democrat win that seat,” Inouye said in April 2012. By October, however, Inouye had once more tightened his grip on the reins. Representative Mazie Hirono defeated former House Member and longtime Inouye nemesis Ed Case in the primary and won the Senate seat with Inouye’s backing.<sup>64</sup>

In early December 2012, Daniel Inouye was hospitalized. He died of respiratory complications at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on December 17, 2012.<sup>65</sup> When the Senate met on December 18, the presumptive dean of the Senate, Patrick Leahy of Vermont, stood to speak and gestured to Inouye’s empty desk, noting, “Today is the first day since Hawaii became a state that it is not represented by Dan Inouye.”<sup>66</sup> Inouye’s remains were interred at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.

## MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

**Library of Congress, Asian Division** (Washington, DC). *Oral History*: 2003–2011, 8 linear feet. The collection contains videocassettes, DVDs, photographs, and documents related to an oral history project conducted by the United States Capitol Historical Society to document the service of Asian Americans in Congress. Daniel Inouye is included among the interviewees.

**University of Hawaii at Manoa Library, Archives and Manuscripts Department, Hawaii Congressional Papers Collection** (Honolulu, HI). *Papers*: 1959–2012, 1,237 linear feet. The collection includes casework, legislation, subject files, and committee-related material. Subjects covered include Watergate, Iran-Contra, and Hawaii-related issues. The papers are currently closed, but researchers may apply to access certain portions.

## NOTES

- 1 Lloyd Shearer, “Sen. Daniel Inouye: Watergate Changed His Life,” 11 November 1973, *Parade*: 4.
- 2 The White House, “Remarks by the President at the Presidential Medal of Freedom Ceremony,” press release, 20 November 2013, accessed 27 January 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/11/20/remarks-president-presidential-medal-freedom-ceremony>.
- 3 Daniel Inouye and Lawrence Elliott, *Journey to Washington* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967): 11–17.
- 4 Tom Coffman, *The Island Edge of America: A Political History of Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003): 299.
- 5 Shearer, “Sen. Daniel Inouye: Watergate Changed His Life.”
- 6 Mark Preston, “Inouye Reflects on His 40 Years in Congress,” 13 September 1999, *Roll Call*: A56–A57.
- 7 “Daniel Inouye,” Academy of Achievement, 12 August 2013, <http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/ino0bio-1> (accessed 15 March 2016).
- 8 Preston, “Inouye Reflects on His 40 Years in Congress.”
- 9 Ed Henry, “Inouye Finally Gets His Medal,” 26 June 2000, *Roll Call*: 1.
- 10 Richard Borreca, “Fatal Cancer Could Not Dim Maggie’s Grace,” 14 March 2006, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, <http://archives.starbulletin.com/2006/03/14/news/story02.html> (accessed 15 March 2016).
- 11 “About Dan,” official website of United States Senator Daniel K. Inouye, accessed 18 December 2012, <http://www.inouye.senate.gov/about-dan/biography/> (site discontinued).
- 12 Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991): 171.
- 13 John S. Whitehead, *Completing the Union: Alaska, Hawai‘i, and the Battle for Statehood* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004): 178–179.
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“EVEN IF WE WERE NOT  
CHARGED WITH LEGAL  
OBLIGATIONS AND A TRUST  
RESPONSIBILITY, WE WOULD  
STILL HAVE TO RECOGNIZE  
THE MORAL IMPERATIVE  
THAT WE, AS A NATION,  
ARE CHARGED WITH WHEN  
IT COMES TO IMPROVING  
THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE IN  
RESERVATION COMMUNITIES.”

Daniel K. Inouye  
*Roll Call*, May 6, 1993